CHAPTER VII

TO RECAPITULATE

A detailed analysis of the formative influences of both Auden and Gokak had been done in the foregoing chapters. By bringing to the forefront their impact on the writings of the two poets, a detailed study of their poems had also been done. Auden with his global experience and Gokak with his Eastern experience had knowingly or unknowingly enriched their poems with their philosophic vision. The path from philosophy to spirituality had been different for these two poets. The earlier chapters bring to the forefront the deviations the poets took regarding their aim, and how successful they had been in their venture had also become topics for discussion.

Auden with his Western civilization and Eastern spiritual experience and Gokak with his Eastern civilization and a scattering of the western experience, learned from their life experiences to leave the narrow boundaries of regionalism and nationalism and ventured ahead with the idea of universal citizenship. Their dreams had become a reality in the present day world but with a difference. The global citizenship is in terms of technology and not in terms of humanity. That is to say, that people had abridged the gap between nations in terms of software and technology; still, they hesitate to move towards a universal citizenship as envisaged by Auden and Gokak. Theirs was the belief
based on spiritual experience which made it possible to see a fellow human being as a creation of God rather than as an Indian or an American or a European. The poems of Auden and Gokak equally point out this fact in different ways. The later poems of Auden emphasize this fact as is seen in the detailed study included in the earlier chapters of this study.

Present in the World

As a young poet Auden achieved a fame no other young poet had till then achieved among the peer group. A feeling that the world is his to take usually comes with this achievement to any other person. Auden enjoyed his popularity but was not deterred from his verse composing. The youthful enthusiasm that made him a member of the 'pink generation' was based on a sincere wish to see equality among fellow human beings the world over. The isolated poem *Spain 1937* was a spontaneous deliberation on the part of a human being, shocked at the happenings in Spain. It is this spontaneity of heart that Auden retained till the end of his life. Critics may call it impulsiveness but it is also a willingness to be a part of those who fought injustice. Even the disillusionment with communism became part of the growing up process for Auden. His dangling with psychology and the ensuing poems like “Miss Gee,” “Victor,” “John Honeyman” etc., can be regarded as an attempt to understand human psyche with its strange ailments and quirky behaviour better, if not completely. The indebtedness to Sigmund
Freud for his contribution to mankind is acknowledged in the poem written on him. The veneer of nonchalance that Auden assumes throughout his poetic career cracks here and there when poems like “The Unknown Citizen” and “The Shield of Achilles” were written as part of his poetic career. The wealth of repressed emotions or lack of emotions, as it appears to the readers, evoked a vogue among the poets of the period. Such was Auden’s influence on the younger generation of writers, that many of them, including the New York School of Poets, acknowledge their indebtedness to him.

Towards Philosophy

Auden’s psychological phase gives way to yet another phase, that of philosophy. The philosophers who loomed large in his horizon like Kierkegaard, Tillich, Niebuhr and Nietzsche answered the questions that troubled Auden about Man’s relationship with God. Each in turn contributed to the making of a philosophical Auden at the same time clearing his path towards spirituality. The Western world had been the monopoly of trade and commercialism that it had seeped into the make-up of each individual there. Naturally there was a search for identity since the identity crisis became the dominant factor after the world wars. Of the various solutions available, the most possible one was to turn towards Eastern spirituality. Auden remained steadfast in his world and accepted the outlets offered by Western philosophy and western
spirituality. His search had been for a religionless Christianity once the identity crisis was solved by philosophy. Still as Milton D. Hunnex says.

Religionless Christianity identifies openness to the Holy spirit with abandonment of that very spirit. It identifies acceptance of the world with acquiescence to it.

(Hunnex 96)

Hunnex was contrasting Religionless Christianity with Evangelical Christianity in his book. Auden was searching for salvation but it is not a salvation apart from his fellow human beings. His questioning mind could accept Christianity and he read more about it. His reading in this genre enlightened his world view as nothing else would. Christianity, as Edward Schillebeeckx says, along with other Western religions is "... characterized by their emphasis on a personal God who speaks to man, questions him and challenges him." (Schillebeeckx 114) Both Western and Eastern spirituality originated in Asia. In "Memorial for a City," the four poems trace the evolution of a thought that ends with the different images the city presents to the readers. Auden’s philosophical reflections become evident in the poems published towards the beginning of 1950 continuing to 1960’s.

Humanitarian Spirituality

While his search for spirituality continued through philosophy, Auden found an Eastern spiritual characteristic in his make-up. It is that
of withdrawing from the society, going deeper into one’s own self and realizing the truth about the self. But the self realization did not keep him alienated from society or people; even in the midst of others he could continue his withdrawal. It is this latter that Auden did as his biography will affirm. Never did he search for solitude except for writing. At all other times Auden was perfectly at ease with his fellow human beings. The poems about his housekeeper, “Thanks Giving for Habitat” all show the joy of finding life in little things, the recognition of the Divine Spirit in other beings. The eco spirituality that one finds in “Bucolics” is a concern of an educated individual for the future of the environment while “Horæ Canonicae” traces a day in the life of a body which could be that of any individual. The dispassionate way of looking at things, even at one’s own life, is an inverted show of concern for those very things. It is this concern for others that constitutes his spirituality which had evolved through Christianity.

From the Individual to Universal Citizenship

Gokak, the man and Gokak the poet, are twin aspects of the same being. The Eastern Spirituality is that of acceptance rather than questioning. But Gokak’s poems about Lord Siva reveal a depth of the man and the questions that reach the brink of utterance but not uttered aloud. The understanding comes with the blessing of his worshipping deity Lord Siva.
The poems with its varying themes afford a view into the mind of the poet. Places and people become themes for his poems as “In Visnagar Again” “Poet’s Poet” and “The Man of Noble Living.” The existence of the Divine Being is celebrated in the poem “The Million-Armed Person,” while poems like “Space-Time Continuum” show a tendency towards philosophising. To him also spirituality is with fellow human beings rather than apart from them as is the case with Eastern religions. The individual gives way to the poet and the poet in turn aspires and attains Universal Citizenship. Gokak’s poems progress from poems on individuals to heartfelt prayer offerings as in “The Last Ditch” [CRP, 134] “The Floating Isle” [CRP, 124] “Isle of Life,” “Child of Ocean” [175] and philosophical and spiritual poems like “A Leafless Tree” and “A Piece of Stone.”

His classification of the poems in CRP shows an orderly mind which is unique to a poet like Gokak. The references to science and mathematics occasionally delight the readers. Yet the crisp and precise manner of presenting poems, at the same time writing long winded ones, shows a comparison with Auden.

Torch Bearers

Gokak’s steady progress in faith and spirituality is also revealed in his poems. In more ways than one, these two poets agree on the common ideas and their understanding of self takes them to a higher plane than
the ordinary. This in turn had helped to bring about a progress in the development of the self and it culminates in the vision of fellow human beings as the torch-bearers of that knowledge of the Supreme. Human weaknesses and infirmities of the body and soul are only obstacles to be overpowered or ignored and one can do that very well if it means a higher goal. Auden had deliberately ignored his homosexuality, for he considers it as another aspect of love. Love in any manner still remains love for him. In spite of his conversion to Christianity, he refused to cloud his vision by what the church preached and what Jesus preached. To him the path was definitely clear.

With Gokak, the issues though not so complicated, were still similar. The influence of the vacanacaras had cleared his vision along with the guidance of seers like Aurobindo, Tagore and more specially Sri Sai Baba. The lack of a prophet or a saint in the modern times had increased the relevance of Sai Baba to the devotees. The number of people who flock around Baba is indicative of the solace his presence afforded to them. Gokak was influenced, a great deal in his later life by Baba as is seen by the book that he had written and the verses that he had composed on Baba. Baba also became part of the process of Gokak’s.

Tracing the vision of Auden and Gokak, in their poems, the spiritual aridity of the world brought about by war is emphasized. How this in turn brought about an inner vision to the two poets as is seen in their poems is also developed in detail. The inner vision pointed to
philosophy as the leading light towards spirituality for both poets is testified through their poems. Moreover this spirituality encompassed the whole world, in fact the whole universe itself as their poems verify.

The emergence of a new ethos has constituted fragmentation and disintegration leaving in its wake anxiety and boredom. The personal life has been distorted by modernity and the holocaust of war. Nothing remains sacred, nothing remains meaningful. The challenge before the new generation is no real challenge but only a survival of the fittest. Morality and values do not charm the present generation and everything has become mechanical as Auden points out in his "The Unknown Citizen". The identity of the human beings has disintegrated into numbers to be kept locked safely for future reference. The cataloguing has already been done along with classification. This gives man an identity if he loses his number, he is doomed in the technical world. The vision of Auden and Gokak becomes united here. The nuclear conflagration has made the world to sit back and restock the situation before it. Auden became part of this process also as his brief career in the army testifies. Gokak, on the other hand, uses his pen effectively in his own niche in India and spread out in various ways by being part of the process of taking the country to the twenty first century.

Evidently both poets had much reverence for people who had influenced them, and had written either poems on them or whole books as in the case of Gokak. Very few writers do this in the modern times.
They feel that it is old fashioned. But these old fashioned virtues give meaning to life, even if it is a technically modern life. Auden and Gokak affirm it through their life and their writings. The life experiences of both poets show that they have the Buddha - nature, with the characteristic aspect of seeking truth, seeking knowledge. Nothing and no one stands in their path to obstruct them. The changing variants of their poems reveal their inexhaustible journey towards their goal. They consider themselves as pilgrims on their path to Moksha or salvation. To them it is not by merely remaining a devotee of their chosen God, but by serving humanity and by having compassion for others, that moksha is attained. Religion was not an obstruction for them but a path to be followed; the personal choice could be the promptings of the soul or of the dear ones. The evolution of man through the ages has brought him to the realms of modernity which brings in a shift from the religious to the scientific view. It is here that the spiritual vision of Auden and Gokak, evolved from their philosophic vision, becomes meaningful.